

Creating the Next Normal

Edition 01 – April 20–27, 2020



At Faculty of Change, we are striving just like you to respond to this new climate of rapid change.

Everyone is wondering what comes next—and making massive decisions without knowing.

What we need is a plan for uncertainty. We need to prepare for and begin to shape a Next Normal that will remain in constant flux.

But when action is urgent,
there is little time to plan.

Incorporating the future
into your daily business
requires an adaptive and
lightweight approach.

We created a framework
that reflects that reality.

01

What has changed?

02

What is changing?

03

What will change next?

This publication will help you quickly understand possible futures and start planning for uncertainty in the Next Normal.

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Each edition will highlight a few themes of change important to the moment. It's a work in progress, just like today's world.

Take 10 minutes a day. Think about what has changed, is changing and will change next. Pick examples in each category.

Use them as principles to test the future viability of potential strategies. Or as thought starters to imagine how to transform.

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Our foresight strategists constantly scan the globe for weak signals of change: the first hints of new realities and behaviors. With time and momentum these become trends, movements, or, sometimes, the next normal.

Since initial reports on Chinese social media in early January, we've collected thousands of signals related to COVID-19, and spoken to dozens of experts and leaders to put them in context.

This primary research is distilled into themes: key new uncertainties and certainties selected for their high strategic relevance.

We'll highlight the most critical themes of change in each edition. If you need access to more comprehensive or sector-specific themes, please get in touch .

01

What has changed?

The End of Digital Prejudice

DIGITAL IS THE NEW 'IN REAL LIFE', FOR ALL DEMOGRAPHICS

FROM: **Face-to-Face**
TO: **Screen-to-Screen**

It's not just remote working. Everywhere you look, people are engaging in online interactions that were previously thought to be 'real life only': wine nights, fitness classes, haircuts, nightclub parties, and meals with family. While digital was formerly seen as a 'less than' experience, it has now become the only thing tethering many of us to a sense of normal life. Beyond just younger generations, almost everyone is now learning about and experimenting with the digital world as the primary way of working, buying and socializing. In the Next Normal, highly engaged in our digital lives, we may need to find reasons for events to be held In Real Life at all.

Expect digital conversion and volumes to continue to rise, as the new types of digital interactions people are inventing compete with nostalgia for in-person and in-store experiences.

▶ Trying everything online is reframing the value of personal interaction. [\[link\]](#)

▶ Club Quarantine, the hottest new (digital) nightclub. [\[link\]](#)

How can you create meaningful social interactions with your customers and partners online?

What is the digital-first version of your business—especially if you are traditionally a brick & mortar business?

What digital offerings could you create with your current capabilities?

Trading Efficiency for Resilience

SUPPLY CHAINS REBUILT ON THE VIRTUES OF REDUNDANCY

FROM: **Eggs in One Basket**

TO: **Diversified Risk**

For many companies and individuals, 'out of stock' is something not dealt with in years, if ever. As our dependence on complex supply chains shows weakness under the stress of the pandemic, the benefits of just-in-time efficiency aren't looking like all they're cracked up to be. And while the trend had been towards consolidation and globalization to drive up purchasing power and lower costs, industry and commerce are now rapidly configuring around multiple suppliers and domestic protectionism. Even automation takes a hit: in the battle of humans vs. robots, humans have the benefit of not needing spare parts.

Expect a shift to networks of supply, built around a well-diversified set of adaptive systems (goodbye one system of record), processes, and relationships (how about humans + robots?). These will serve businesses and society better in the long run—and weather catastrophic events in between.

▶ Japan creates ¥240bn fund to help manufacturers diversify their supply chains. [\[link\]](#)

▶ Grocer H-E-B now selling prepared meals from local restaurants. [\[link\]](#)

What or who is your business's greatest dependency? And, in turn, what or who is their's?

Where is the need for redundancy in your systems? Could this be a source of value, instead of cost?

Where can decentralization bring opportunity into your ecosystem?

02

What is changing?

Bio-Status

HEALTH BECOMES THE NEW PASSPORT – AND STATUS SYMBOL

FROM: **My Body, My Business**

TO: **My Body, Your Business**

Many parts of the world are fastidiously tracking the health of their residents in response to the pandemic. In some regions, tracking is already mandatory to leave your home. While holding the ‘right’ passport once granted freedom of movement to residents of wealthy nations, now visible proof of health and hygiene will eclipse these traditional markers of status. The trackers we have voluntarily incorporated into our personal, health and home lives will gradually evolve into involuntary biotracking, possibly further amplified as predictive biotracking. Those that can prove (and pay for) good health or immunity will be granted privileges denied to those that cannot.

Expect the benefits of bio-status to accumulate for people with the money, time and freedom required to eat healthy, exercise, isolate and access medical care, further marginalizing others.

Germany plans to issue COVID-19 antibody certificates. [\[link\]](#)

Etihad Airways introduces health check kiosks as part of boarding procedures. [\[link\]](#)

How might the availability of health data amplify or strain your ability to serve your customer’s needs?

What new product or service could your business offer, if bio tracking data was consensually shared?

If data collection and sharing norms change, what side of the privacy vs. transparency debate will you be on?

New Kinds of Experts

DISTRIBUTED EXPERTISE IS TAKING OVER FROM AUTHORITIES

FROM: Trusted Observer

TO: Closest to the Problem

New individual voices outpaced traditional media in providing information as the current pandemic unfolded. As events spread from China to Italy to the US, doctors, low-level government officials and the person on the street used social media to give evidence and advice missing from the news. New email newsletters and Whatsapp groups sprung up, taking existing trends of ‘curation’ and ‘aggregation’ in new directions by filling information vacuums left by local authorities with synthesis of multiple expert voices. Meanwhile, people living with disabilities, precarious gig workers, young adults, and even just long-time remote workers sharing their experiences helped us all understand ‘new’ realities that have long been part of others’ daily lives.

Expect this pivot on the influencer economy to magnify pre-existing trends of relying on distributed expertise and online social proof instead of traditional authorities, creating an opening for brands and corporations to contribute their own knowledge in ways that aim to inform, rather than promote.

➔ **Education startup founder’s pandemic analysis gets 40M+ views, support from epidemiologists. [\[link\]](#)**

➔ **Steak-Umm (a frozen beef slice brand) heralded as leading coronavirus voice on Twitter. [\[link\]](#)**

Which of your customers or partners are currently closest to the problems your business solves?

How can you give them a voice or amplify their ability to inform?

How could you work with your ‘new experts’ to innovate on solutions to offer?

03

What will change next?

Tech that Replaces Touch

DEPRIORITIZING THE PHYSICAL FOR THE GOOD OF SOCIETY

FROM: **The Physical World**
TO: **Look, but Don't Touch**

The current built form is not designed with a pandemic in mind. People risk contamination through the need to touch everyday places and spaces to navigate them. Smart tech had already started moving from touchscreens to voice, and in the Next Normal we will see the accelerated proliferation of things like touchless doors and faucets, as well as new forms of sensor- or voice-enabled technology. Promoted and implemented on the basis of their ability to enable physical distancing and hygienic use, these touchless designs may also realize their original intentions to increase accessibility for individuals with disabilities. What remains to be seen is how we will communicate heft and emotion using only four of our five senses.

Expect to see touchless 'hacks' in the near term, but over the long term, greater investment in the redesign of communal, public, or commercial spaces to be navigated without touch.

► "Hygiene Hand" antimicrobial door opener outperforms Kickstarter goal by 100x. [\[link\]](#)

► Danish designer redesigns local markets for a time of social distancing. [\[link\]](#)

If touch is important to your customer experience, how might you rethink it to prioritize the other four senses?

How will new touchless tech impact your business - from new opportunities for customer insight, to privacy and other regulatory requirements?

How can you think about accessible design for all, ensuring that new tech doesn't make some experiences accessible to new clientele while discounting the needs of others?

Goodbye Experiential Everything

HIGH TRAFFIC AND DWELL TIMES AS SYMPTOMS OF POOR PERFORMANCE

FROM: Touch and Feel

TO: Convenience at All Costs

Prior to the pandemic, most everything had become an Experience. Clothing stores were cafes and restaurants Instagram backgrounds. Physical distancing shifted the emphasis to safety and expediency: get in and get out, or better yet, don't go in at all.

Much like it took a generation for the frugal habits of the Depression to fade, willingness to be in a crowd, and touch and feel a brand, will take more than a reopening of commerce to recover. Those with value propositions beyond the in-store experience will fare best: selling what people truly must have, emphasizing convenience and quality of service, and delivering to the door or curb, or in a private appointment.

Expect a redesign of brick-and-mortar presence around the same lines. Smaller, more focused stores that integrate the online and offline seamlessly will replace plush sofas and DJs. Those outside of retail will expand their communities and value propositions to live virtually.

➔ **In Singapore, you can check crowd levels at stores before deciding to visit. [\[link\]](#)**

➔ **First-mover brands see promising results from interactive virtual communities. [\[link\]](#)**

What value did 'the Experience' have in your customer journey or for your employee workplace?

Can your business replicate that same value digitally?

What essential aspects of your business make more seamless and hyper-convenient?

Keep pace with the Next Normal

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To respond successfully to the change caused by COVID-19, organizations will need to roadmap paths to resilient growth, which link today's decisions and initiatives with tomorrow's strategies and offerings.

This process begins with a comprehensive understanding of what has changed, is changing, and will change next—in the world, in your competitive landscape, and in the experiences and needs of your employees and customers.

How to go further

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1. Create a shared document (Miro [[link](#)] works great) where you can gather thoughts on what has changed, what is changing and what will change next.
2. Update as new information comes from the front line, reports from us and others, your own daily life, or your foresight and insight teams.
3. Test your decisions, strategies and initiatives for future viability.
4. Prioritize work streams around those elements of the Next Normal that are most probable or promising.

Faculty of Change is here to help

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Our team of futurists, strategists, anthropologists, and designers have a plan to help you answer the most pressing questions:

What role do you play in the Next Normal?

We can help you understand the changes brought about by COVID-19, and how you can be successful across multiple possible futures.

How will you regain/maintain relevance?

We will illustrate challenges and opportunities that you may not have anticipated, allowing you to pivot your strategy and market position.

What can you do next?

We help clients develop transformation roadmaps, with discrete sets of actions to take around your role, offering, and value proposition, in order to thrive.

In three weeks or less, you can have a clear understanding of the challenges faced by your business, an action plan to serve new market needs, and a team aligned around the transformation you'll need to be and remain resilient.

Get Started

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